INTRODUCTION
In a broad sense, this work is about Individualisation\(^1\) as a historical phenomenon in modern Malayalee society. More specifically it revolves around the \textit{en-gendering}\(^2\) of the Individual in modern Keralam, the mechanisms of which have been in operation ever since the nineteenth century but have gained strength and scope thereafter. This is an initial attempt at exploring how gender has entered into the very definition of the Individual, in modern Keralam, investing her/him with specific \textquote{capacities}, implicating her/him in new collectivities. So persistent is this twin emergence that it seems quite pertinent to say that the Individual did not simply emerge here, but was \textit{en-gendered}.

In the existing literature on the history of Keralam, considerations of gender occupy a relatively minor space.\(^3\) But the same cannot be said about the category \textit{\textquote{Women}}.\(^4\)

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1. The \textit{Individualisation} discussed here pertains to a shift in focus in the situatedness of the individual from being the member of a group etc. to a social category in itself. When \textit{Individual} is written thus, i.e., with the capital \textquote{I} it indicates the latter, and when written with the lower case, it indicates the former.

2. The term \textit{engendering} is used in this work in two different senses. In the first sense it refers to the \textit{coming into being of the Individual}. In the second sense, the word is split, the first two alphabets treated as a prefix \textquote{en}-'. This would lead to reading the word \textit{en-gendering} as \textquote{covering or surrounding (the Individual) with gender, placing gender into or upon (the Individual)}. By evoking these two together, one seeks to emphasise that Individualisation and gendering are not separate phenomenon but aspects of the same, occurring simultaneously. The use of this term in this work is intentionally ambiguous, to imply both senses at the same time, and separately, according to the specific context.

3. Historical work on gender, gender-relations or even \textquote{Women} in Keralam is relatively rare. A survey of Women's History in India published in 1992, could identify only one work worthy of mention. See, A. (..continued)
Historical data about women for any period in Keralam's past is neither plentiful nor easily accessible. But the category 'Women' has played a major role in legitimating the paradigm of Progress and Liberation within which much of the history of modern Keralam has been written. The account of the glorious entry of 'Malayalee Women' from barbarism and

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Basu, 'Women's History in India: A Historiographic Survey' in K. Offen, R. Pierson, J. Randall (ed.s), Writing Women's History: International Perspectives, London: Macmillan, 1992, pp.181-209. The seminar on 'Women in Keralam: Past and Present' held in 1995 (February 11-12) at Thiruvananthapuram did see a number of papers with explicit historical themes, but the share of such work in the total volume of social scientific research in Keralam seems quite low, as evidenced by other seminars. See Abstracts (Four Volumes) of the 'International Congress of Kerala Studies' at Thiruvananthapuram, August 27-29, 1994 and also Abstracts of the 'International Conference: Europe and South Asia 500 Years' held at Calicut and Cochin, May 18-20, 1998. An article which surveyed existing sociological work in Keralam and indicated possibilities for further research, published in 1976, completely ignored the possibility of studying gender-relations. See, Joan P. Mencher and K. Raman Unni, 'Anthropological and Sociological Research in Kerala: Past, Present and Future Directions', in Burton Stein(ed.), Essays on South India, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976, pp.121-148. It seems that research interest in gender and gender relations is relatively recent in Keralam, especially in the discipline of history; at present, at the end of '90s, one still finds very little substantial work in these areas.

4. It must be stressed that here we mean by 'Women' a category that has been historically produced and treated as if it referred to some homogenous, unambiguously identifiable reality. It does not refer to 'Women' in the sense of a group of people actually existing, similar to each other by virtue of their sex. Here when the capital is used, the reference is always to the former and when the lower case is used, to the latter.

5. This has had a long past, going back to the official Gazetteers and Manuals. The relatively high levels of female literacy is interpreted as evidence for the superiority of society in V. Nagam Aiya's Report on the Census of Travancore (1891) and is an important element in his representation of Tiruvonamkood as an ideal Hindu Kingdom, and this was noticed by reviewers (See, Nagam Aiya: A Biographical Sketch, Thiruvananthapuram: Keralodayam Press, 1911, p.36, written by 'An Old Schoolfellow and Friend'). This continued to figure in representations of Tiruvonamkood for much later. See, for instance, the note on 'Travancorean Women' which appeared in The Star of India quoted in Travancore Information and Listener Vol 7(3), Nov. 1946, p.13. By the 1930's this was beginning to be questioned, as in the editorial of the Kesari which pointed out that the claims regarding the higher status of women here were false. See, 'Tiruvonamkoodine Pattiyulla London Prasangangal' (Speeches about Tiruvonamkood in London), Kesari, 21 June, 1933. Reprinted in A Balakrishna Pillai, (continued)
subordination to civilization and freedom has too often served to support the larger picture of progress of Keralam from pre-modern to modern times, in a wide variety of contexts. Important attempts have been made to qualify this picture, such as made in a recent work, which has sought to examine "... whether women's creation of a self-image challenged or differed from conceptions of Womanhood projected by the dominant discourse within social reform and political movements" in Keralam, or in yet another which has sought to identify the 'limitations of liberation' for women in the modernisation of Malayalee society. But its persuasiveness has remained more or less undiminished; it has preserved its dominance, forming almost a part of the commonsense of the average educated Malayalee.

Perhaps one could attempt to shift focus away from the category 'Women' to the phenomenon of en-gendering. No doubt the emergence of this category is important in such a history; however, here, it does not enjoy centrality. Perhaps the attempt could be to show up 'Women' as a historically-given category, not an already-given one. What might be at stake here is discussed in the following points.

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Kesariyude Mukhaprasangangal (Editorials of Kesari), Kottayam: D.C books, 1989, p.91. This criticism obviously stayed within the same paradigm. In academic accounts it has remained a powerful presence up to the present, though no longer unchallenged. See, Abstracts, op. cit., n.3.


The history of the en-gendering of Individuals is not the same as what is today familiar as 'Women's History'. Here it is the discursive conditions under which it becomes possible to speak of such categories as 'Men' or 'Women', and the inclusionary and exclusionary moves by which these are constituted, that get highlighted. The effects which such ideals as 'Man' and 'Woman' have upon the real, further, become central to such work—how they operate in the reorganisation of institutions, reordering of space, reform of the conduct, control of individuals and reconstitution of power-networks. The history of en-gendering would concentrate on the specific ways through which men and women begin to recognise

8. In order to avoid generalising what is a category that accommodates various approaches, one may be more precise in specifying what is meant by 'Women's History' here. In this context, it corresponds to Michel de Certeau's description of a history that is necessary for a group: "It constantly mends the rips in the fabric that joins past and present. It assures a "meaning" which surmounts the violence and division of time. It creates a theatre of references and common values which guarantee a sense of unity and a "symbolic" communicability of the group. It leads to an avoidance in the unifying representation of all traces of the division which organises its production". Michel de Certeau, 'History and Fiction', in Heterologies, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986, p.205.

9. Feminist historiographers have voiced the need to find a non-biological grounding on which to base the category 'Women' for sometime now. The need to assert the identity of women over other considerations such as race or nationality was linked to feminism's early political aspirations. See, essays by Gerda Lerner and others in B.A. Caroll(ed.) Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976. Feminist theoreticians have sought this commonality in a socially-constructed 'common experience'. Such 'common experience, was found, for example, in the specific nature of women's activities in which mental, manual and emotional abilities are combined (H.Rose, 'Hand, Brain and Heart: A Feminist Epistemology for the Natural Sciences', Signs 9(1), Autumn 1983, pp.78-90); or in the 'sensuous, concrete quality' attributed to women's labour in the production of use-values (N.Hartsock, 'The Feminist Standpoint: Developing a Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism?' in S.Harding, M.Hintikka (eds), Discovering Reality, Dordrecht: D.Reidel, 1983, pp.283-310); or in the relational character of female subjectivity in, C.Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982, or in the common condition of lack of access to power in G. Lerner, 'New Approaches to the Study of Women in American History', from B.A. Carroll, ibid., pp. 31-39.
themselves as gendered subjects, as 'Man' and 'Woman', and adopt modes of conduct deemed appropriate to such subjectivity. The problems involved in the simplistic acceptance of the category of 'Women' are well-known by now. Such problems have also been raised regarding the writing of the history of Keralam in a recent paper which has sought to demonstrate how the use of this category here has almost invariably worked to foreground and privilege Savarna women and their struggles, to the exclusion of other women.

The ideas of Progress and Liberation which have so vitally informed most available accounts of the history of modern Malayalee society too cannot be treated as given. Here, they may be interrogated in their specificity as ideas which manifested in the period of concern here, in a particular socio-cultural context. In other words, the question 'To what extent were women or men liberated in Keralam through Modernisation?' would be replaced with several others: 'What were the elements that entered the idea of Liberation as it was articulated in late-nineteenth and early twentieth century-Keralam?'; how did it differ when


applied to Man and Woman'?; 'what mutations has it undergone in the course of the present century?', and so on. Such questions may either help to contextualise these concepts and thereby make them descriptively more adequate, or simply dismantle them.

(2) The statement that the Individual was en-gendered in modern Keralam seems to imply that the sex of the body was never important in the older order in Keralam, or that notions of psychological characters supposedly accompanying physical sex were irrelevant before. But we do have ample reason to believe that the codes of conduct within particular social groups in nineteenth century Keralam were organised, among other considerations, by those of sex also\(^1\) and that this continued to mark everyday life well into the twentieth century. Anthropologists and observers have noticed sharp segregation between the sexes, and different codes of conduct for the sexes among traditional communities, both matrilineal and patrilineal.\(^2\) Such codes differed significantly from group to group. As for notions of

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12. Uma Chakravarti refers to such a social organisation of the sexes in her conception of 'Brahmanical Patriarchy' in which she sees caste and gender shaping each other, and the boundaries between castes maintained crucially through women. Patriarchal codes, she maintains, ensures that this structure can be reproduced without violating the hierarchical order of closed endogamous circles, each distinct from and higher or lower than the other. Brahmanical patriarchal codes for women differ according to the status of caste-groups in the hierarchy of castes, with the most stringent control over female sexuality for the higher castes. The usefulness of this model for understanding pre-modern society in Keralam cannot be judged at this point; it calls for much more detailed inquiry. See her article 'Conceptualising Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State; Economic and Political Weekly Vol 28(14), April 3, 1993, pp.579-85.

13. M.S.A. Rao, who carried out field work in Malabar in 1951, notes the observation of strict segregation between male and female siblings in the Nair Taravad (Nair homestead) once they passed childhood. (M.S.A. Rao, Social Change in Malabar, Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1957, pp.77-79). He also notes strict sex-segregation in the Nambutiri Illam, the Brahmin homestead, but of a different sort. (..continued)
universal *Purushadharmam* (Manly Duty) or *Streedharmam* (Womanly Duty), they might have circulated; however, the specific codes of conduct of specific groups seem to have been of much greater practical import than them.

What is significant about the period under consideration is that gender attained an unprecedented centrality in the visions of ideal society; gender seems to have become a crucial element in the very definition of the Individual, around which visions of an enlightened society of the future were woven. This in fact, often required even a rejection of earlier notions of sexual difference. However the whole issue of continuity and change from the older order needs serious consideration. How elements of the older order might have undergone transformation; what strategies have ensured their survival etc. are questions that must be confronted. At present one does sometimes see the tendency to deploy the notion of continuity as a substitute for analysis in order to obtain explanations for the apparent paradoxes presented by modernity in Kerala.{14} Rather than assume a continuous history

{14} See how a fairly recent work of Kerala history that employs Marxian tools uses continuity as explanation: "One important reason is the social stuntedness resulting from the weak industrialisation process in Kerala. In Kerala where women's education and technical skills have developed considerably, this control is made possible through *traditional social norms*. Caste, religion and other (..continued)
based on overarching categories such as 'Women', or completely deny the possibility of continuity, it could be possible to enquire into the specific ways in which elements of the older order continue to survive and circulate in the present. The history of en-gendering need not be taken to be a celebration of the discontinuous, as if this meant a complete and total denial of continuity.

(3) The history of en-gendering, ideally, would be much more than an exploration of the shifts and changes in the ideas about gender, for the en-gendering of Individuals seems to be much more than a change in the realm of ideas. New ideas were definitely gaining ever-firmer ground by the late nineteenth century, but alongside these, whole sets of practices that aimed at fashioning a new Self were being proposed and set in operation through new institutions. Physical sex was treated, explicitly or implicitly, as an important factor, that

superstitious practices and beliefs influence women strongly. Chastity and morality are effective means of controlling woman's reproductive potential..... These obligations appear to be the latest version of feudal norms" (my italics). K.N. Ganesh, Keralathinte Innalekal (The Yesterdays of Kerala), Thiruvananthapuram: Dept. of Cultural Publications, Govt. of Kerala, 1990, pp.238-39. Such an account fails to confront the historical manifestation recognised as 'modernity' in Kerala in any serious terms, preferring to hint at a certain 'incompleteness' alone.

15. How 'Women' can serve to highlight this is demonstrated by historian Robin Jeffrey's use of this category to signify the dimensions of change in the history of the State of Tiruvitamkoor: "In the 1850's, the Travancore Government enforced caste-laws which required most women to go bare-breasted; in 1915, a Travancore woman on a government scholarship graduated in medicine from the University of London". (R.Jeffrey, 'Introduction', The Decline of Nayar Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore 1847-1908, London: Sussex University Press, 1976). Here the category 'Women' helps to highlight the vision of continuously unfolding social change.

16. It may be mentioned that it is the new ideal of self which began to gain ground in the late nineteenth
determined the capacities that could be possibly generated in the natural body and the kind of disciplinary regimen it could be subjected to. Michel Foucault speaks of the complex relation that existed between sex and truth in the modern age, which persists despite all corrections—to the extent that even if a 'virile woman' or 'passive man' or same-sex love may be accepted as socially benign, there is still the belief that "... there is something like an "error" in what they do... a manner of acting that is not adequate to reality". He remarks that in the West the late nineteenth century was a period of intensified research into sexual identity in which the norm was powerfully established by the assiduous recording of all variations from it. Now, possessing a set of mental dispositions supposedly natural to particularly-sexed bodies was projected as important, and to engage in activities not 'in tune' with one's sex, it was argued, would have harmful effects. For instance, the 'excessive' intellectual activity of women, it was often argued, would impair their capacity to bear children, and provoke hysteria. Ideas of this kind or similar ones, quoted as scientific

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Century in Keralam that is indicated when the capital 'S' is used.

17. Such 'capacities' do not really pre-exist in bodies; they are hollowed out. Disiplinary power fashions such 'capacities'. "...it dissociates power from the body, on the other hand, it turns it into an 'aptitude', a 'capacity', which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that may result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection". M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985, p. 138.


20. A detailed account of research into gender in Europe and North America in the late 19th century may (..continued)
opinion, did appear in Keralam in the period concerned. A whole range of institutions that gained greater spread in early twentieth century, in fact, seemed to call for human capacities that appeared to be given by gender. Whole sets of practices were recommended in the fashioning of the Individual, which it was claimed, would help her/him to conform to a gendered subjectivity—measures of 'positive' and 'negative' sort. For instance, in modern educational institutions, the sexuality of teachers and students were subjected to strict observation and anything that seemed to indicate same-sex affection was carefully weeded out. But probably more powerful were practices of the 'positive' type which ranged from elaborate schemes that integrated several minor practices, like 'Womanly' education, to relatively simple ones like wearing a blouse, a ravukka.

Yet it is not easy to make glib distinctions between 'ideas' and 'practice', on this

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21. See, for instance, the argument put forth by Member K.Kunjukrishna Pillai regarding the inadvisability of preventing Assistant School Inspectresses from marrying. See, Proceedings of the Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly Vol II, 1935, pp. 67-68.

22. See, Malayala Manorama, 'Prakriti Virodha Caseukal', (Anti-Natural Cases), March 26, 1906; Malayala Manorama; Editorial, 'Utkrishthavidiyabhyasavum Sadacharavum', (Higher Education and Morality), October 20, 1906. This editorial was about the dismissal of the Professor of Physiology, Narayana Rao, for making homosexual advances to a student from Emakulam. The previous year, the Professor of Mathematics, Subramanya Sastry, had been dismissed for the same offence. The Editor congratulates the Kochi Government for its prompt action. It may be that there were other reasons, and that this particular offence was only a concocted reason. But that this particular offence was indeed advanced to justify dismissal is in itself significant.
ground: their interpenetration is so dense that realms exclusive to each one are difficult to distinguish. Perhaps it is this highly close-knit relation that may be highlighted here, without treating 'ideas' and 'practices' as water-tight compartments.

(4) It might be true that more men than women were exposed to modern knowledge (by coming into contact with State institutions, institutions of the 'Civilising mission' such as those of the protestant missionaries, by studying in modern schools etc.) earlier, and for longer periods. But this need not automatically authenticate a simplistic claim that would pit modernising men against women they sought to modernise in a relation of domination-subordination; indeed, several qualifications must be made, which would add to the complexity of this power-relation. First, not all men had equal access to the institutions mentioned above, and a great many factors--geographical, economic, social, cultural--mediated men's entry into, and contact with, such institutions. Secondly, it need not be assumed that the claim to superiority often put forth by those who were in contact with modern institutions over those who were not, was readily accepted. A text like Indulekha, for instance, was involved not only in the affirmation of the new Woman but also of the new Man. In many eighteenth-and nineteenth-century English novels, aristocratic figures occupy the space of Manhood, who are then 'tamed' by the ideal Woman who is the

embodiment of middle-class values. In novels like Indulekha the aristocratic male of the older order cannot signify Manhood; not even the ideal aristocratic male, as Meenakshi testifies. Manhood is not linked to tradition and the established order in these novels; rather, these present several impediments to 'true' Manhood. And if one assumes that the ideal of modern Man was already legitimised then how is one to explain the struggle for legitimacy of the new Manhood that saturates not only the late nineteenth-century Malayalam novels but also a great deal of writing informed by ideas filtered in through English sources, produced around this period?

Thirdly, it is true that by the late nineteenth century, those who had acquired new education (who, arguably, were mostly men) claimed authority and capacity to evaluate the social life in local society, including home-life, the daily routine of women-folk and domestic ritual. However there is evidence to suggest that this authority was by no means passively accepted by women. The stubborn resistance of women to modernisation was


25. Cheruvathu Chathu Nair, Meenakshi, Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 1990, first published, 1890. In fact, reform-language was one of the agencies through which the new ideals of Manhood began to assert legitimacy.

26. For instance, see the discussion of Talikettukalyanam, the puberty ritual of young Nair girls, published in the Nair Samudaya Parishkari Vol 1(2) 1916, in which all the participants are men, that too, modern - educated men.

27. K.P.S. Menon in his autobiography relates how C.Krishna Pillai, a prominent Nair reformer of the (..continued)
perceived early by missionaries and later by social reformers.\(^{28}\)

Fourthly, even if one were to take that a fully-formed, already-legitimated Man did indeed fashion Woman as his Other, this does not mean that Woman was constituted as powerless. As we shall see in the following chapters a definite sort of power and authority was attributed to Woman, and this was to stay on as a decisive element in conceptions of gender for a very long time. And lastly, those who did come under the sway of reformism accepting the superiority of the modernised Man did not always remain passive: this relation was itself not a smooth but a contested one.

The history of en-gendering would involve tracing out the new networks of power-relations between the sexes that were formed in the period of concern; it would also be concerned with studying the transformation of already-existing power-relations. But it

\(^{28}\) See, for example, Rev. Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore*, London, 1883. Precisely for this reason, reformers felt the need to make them special targets of reformist activity. See, N.R. Krishnan, (.continued)
would also focus upon the larger interests at work in pleas made on behalf of 'Men' or 'Women' or addressing them, increasingly familiar in these times.

(5) Ideally, the history of en-gendering would be also an account of the resistance to such en-gendering as much as it is of its success. For instance, the history of dress-reform (which is definitely of importance in the history of en-gendering) in Keralam, when written some day will reveal not only smooth acceptance of 'proper' ways of covering the body but a whole series of moves and counter-moves, reversals and redeployments, reinforcements and withdrawals. Resistance, however, could be conceived of as much more flexible, and contextual. One would not seek a specific form of resistance, such as, say, 'feminine' or 'popular' which has been marginalised by masculinist or elitist academic practice. It would be accepted that resistance might be found in varied forms, ranging from outright rejection to evasion or reinscription.

(6) The present work does not give much space to the detailing of economic changes that characterised the period under focus. But en-gendering is bound up in a complex way with the transformation of the body into a labouring, economically useful force. These were times in which the economic use of time, resources, human forces or language, their

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Smarana Vol II(Memoir), Cherthala, 1958, p.34.

29. The machinery of en-gendering deploys a mechanism of power significantly similar to that described by Michel Foucault as 'non-sovereign power'. M.Foucault, 'Two Lectures', in Colin Gordon (ed.),

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minimal and efficient utilisation to generate a maximum of material goods, labour, and meaning was being recommended as no less than a necessity. This would be firmly entrenched in the twentieth century in Keralam in the various projects of reform, centred upon community-building, as on State initiative, especially in Tiruvitamkoor. Very often, the usefulness of the body was seen to depend upon its 'natural' capacities, which seemed determined by its sex: this underlay the enthusiastic promotion of the division of labour in which Men would be producers and Women, reproducers ("Since Woman is weak," wrote a missionary-author, "she has no capacity to labour to produce wealth and cannot but depend upon what Man provides her with".)

But economic change or politico-legal events are no ultimate determining force in the history of en-gendering—the latter cannot be reduced to the terms of the former. The history of en-gendering would not be the weaving together of the history of economic or political change and of the transformation of gendered existence, into a single unified history. It would be more an exploration of the points of contact of these distinct histories. This would call for the emergence of many histories that would together comprise,

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30. S. Raju, 'Excurses into Anticipated Future in the Wor(l)ds of Nation and Wealth', Lateral Study Series No.13, School of Social Sciences, MGU, Kottayam, 1995.

31. 'Marumakkathayathalulla Doshangal' (The Disadvantages of Matriliney) from Vidyasanghraham Vol 1(5),1865, p.351
at best, a 'general history'.

II

The material which is worked upon in this thesis is drawn from a variety of sources, from different institutional backgrounds. It is not uncommon to find many of the institutions found involved in en-gendering to be otherwise at odds with each other, often representing different or antagonistic economic or political ambitions, and so on. Yet, by following their involvement in en-gendering Individuals, one may be able to trace out a network of relations linking them, even without their being deliberately involved, geared towards a common purpose. The variety of writings that have been used as historical material here—newspaper reports, writings from Women's Magazines, school text-books, autobiographies, anthropological work, writings by colonial officials, observers and native bureaucrats, reformist writings, legislative debates, public speeches, government reports and proceedings of reformist organisations, Malayalam literature, Gazetteers, Administrative Reports, biographies and so on—have together constituted a field in which new forms of subjectivity were imagined, subjected to questioning and modification, opposed or affirmed. This was the field that made up the public sphere in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Keralam in which 'Public Interest' became the key concern, and issues came to be debated

in its terms. For instance, the 'Condition of the Nambutiris' could be now discussed here, as an issue of 'public concern', something unthinkable in the older order. Ideas and information produced and supported by the agencies of the State, as well as its workings, were now topics of discussion; the Individual, what means were necessary for the fashioning of the Individual, what impediments were to be overcome in achieving self-transformation etc. were all-too-frequently debated in these writings. This field was shaped in and through the confluence of several elements of change in the socio-cultural environment in the highly-charged political situation of nineteenth and early twentieth century Keralam: the entrenchment of the politico-administrative machinery of modern government with its effects upon the social organisation and the distribution of power and authority; mission establishments with their increasing dissemination of western knowledge, new notions of religion, faith and ritualistic practice and new technologies like printing; the emergence and solidification of new modes, techniques and ethics of economic production; the formation of a reading public; the emergence of the modern literary institution; the emergence of new forms of social interaction such as debating societies, reading-clubs and stree-samajams (women's associations) etc. By the end of the nineteenth century the public sphere had certainly emerged as the space in which new forces contended with established socio-cultural and political forces for hegemony. As we might see later, it was already a structured space that actively promoted gendering both in its very structuring (by assigning 'special slots' to women in streesamajams or Women's Magazines) and in the circulation of new
ideals of gendered subjectivity within it.

The writings used here, in a strong sense, embody the above-mentioned confrontation and pronounce it as a historical moment. They facilitated and marked the erosion of the legitimacy of the established modes of ordering things and people and the subjectivities given in the older order(s); the emergence of a new notion of the Self focused upon an interiority; the projection of a new vision of social order into the future. We assume a strong intertextual unity between these texts drawn from different sources. Here, texts that claim to represent reality and those which do not are considered to be equally implicated in the construction of new realities.

The claim made here, that this work uses 'texts', must be further clarified. In one sense, these are all 'texts' in that they are all written. But by 'texts' we mean something rarer than ordinary speech or writing, something constituted by sets of rules, thus preserved and rarefied. For the limited purpose of this work, the term 'discourse' will refer to the sets of rules which enter into the constitution of these texts. There is yet another sense in which these writings may be characterised as 'texts' -- these are writings that very often describe ideal subjectivities and social forms, justify them and prescribe the means by which one may transform oneself and society in the given model. That is, they are text-books-- books that provide authoritative information and directions on a particular subject-matter.

So at one level, one may analyse these texts in order to identify the theoretical
supports set up for the ideas of 'Man' and 'Woman', to investigate the elements that come together in their formation, to specify the interlinkages of these elements, to trace out the changing relations set up between these ideas; the ways in which they are posed against other ideas, the shift in their content and so on. At another level we may look for the specific means of self-transformation they authorise; the manner in which they order and justify these means, the changes recommended from time to time etc. At one level we treat these writings as the textual space in which subjectivities get constituted, modified, contested and so on according to specific sets of rules; in the second, they are treated as manuals, guide-books, which reach out into the world outside the text, recommending the institutional forms, the concrete activity needed to realise ideal subjects and social forms. However these levels may be treated as separate only at the analytical level.

Though the institutional network is not thoroughly explored here, the textual material used constantly refers to it, indicating a complex matrix of power formed through an ensemble of institutions, texts, practices etc. in which a certain knowledge of gender and the Individual and the means which are perceived to be effective for fashioning the (gendered) Individual feed into each other. These texts are mostly those which have been produced in active engagement with institutions, very often produced from within them. Perhaps one could make use of Michel Foucault's notion of Dispositif\(^\text{33}\) to denote the above

\(^{33}\) M. Foucault, 'The Confessions of the Flesh' in op. cit, n.29, above, pp.194-98.
mentioned ensemble, interconnected and heterogenous, which constitutes subjects and organises them. Perhaps it is no coincidence that this concept has been translated as *apparatus* on the one hand, \(^{34}\) and as *grid of intelligibility* on the other.\(^ {35}\) The *Dispositif* has a strategic function of responding to a specific historical situation—here the specific historical situation of Malayalee society in the period specified.\(^ {36}\) The construction of modern gendered identity happens at the very heart of the struggle between forces generated in and through colonial presence and the prevailing order(s), and the *Dispositif* referred to emerged in and through such battles. Having a strategic nature, this has had considerable flexibility, proving highly adaptable.

One may broadly characterise the chief method employed in this work as *interpretative*. No claim is made that the interpretation of any particular text, action or practice made here conforms to the meaning or significance it could have had in the shared contexts of agents involved in them. Further, here, ‘interpretation’ does not resolve to unveil any deeper meanings existing unknown to agents that seems closer to some ‘true’ meaning.

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\(^{34}\) ibid.


\(^{36}\) It may be mentioned that the ‘Malayalee society’ referred to here comprised of the three distinct political units—British Malabar, and the Princely States of Kochi and Tiruvitamkoor, inhabited by Malayalam-speaking people. Reference to ‘Malayalee Society’ and Kerala as a single cultural unit occurs commonly in the textual materials examined here. The names ‘Travancore’ and ‘Cochin’ refer to the States of Tiruvitamkoor and Kochi.
Rather, interpretation here would proceed to answer the question 'what makes it possible for a certain meaning to be ascribed to a certain act, practice or text by agents in a specific socio-historical situation?' It would also make reference to the effects particular acts etc may have had in concrete situations perhaps unforeseen by agents. The term 'interpretative' may therefore be used in this highly specific sense to characterise the method used in this work.

Lastly, it may be mentioned that the present work is by no means a full history of en-gendering in modern Keralam. At best, it brings together fragments of such a history which could be helpful for further investigation into that phenomenon. Perhaps it would not be incorrect to characterise the present work as a tentative effort at exploring the possibilities of such a history.